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ABSTRACT

This model is designed to serve as a conceptual framework for alternative programs with primary emphasis on provisioning (the way in which time, space, material, equipment, and activities are used in the learning environment). The model's concern is to assess concrete examples or tendencies of teachers, students, and the education program. The following two instruments were developed to achieve this objective: (a) the teacher questionnaire, and (b) the observation rating scale. These instruments may be used in the following ways: (a) as diagnostic tools to establish a benchmark for teacher/administrator inservice training; (b) to assess actual provisioning tendencies relative to time, space, and material utilization; and (c) to collect data on teachers' perception of the learning environment. The model attempts to outline functions of teachers and students as desired outcomes or ideals for which alternative schools should be striving. The ultimate objective of the process is to promote active student and teacher involvement resulting in students assuming major responsibilities for their behavior, attitude, and cognition. (JS)

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AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

LOAN Teacher Corps Network

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INTRODUCTION

Alternative schools within the Public School structure have been defined as open schools, schools without walls, magnet schools, multi-cultural-bilingual schools, street academies, integration models, and a number of other descriptive titles and novel programs (Smith, 1973). This proposed model is designed to serve as a conceptual framework for any of the above alternative programs with primary emphasis on provisioning the learning environment.*

The model should not be view as static or a means of standardizing the concept of alternative education. Instead, common elements and tendencies are identified which characterize alternative school activities. With this characterization, distinctions maybe made between alternative activities and prevailing practices of conventional school programs.

OPERATIONALIZING AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL THROUGH INSTRUMENTATION

While there are other functions, skills and attitudes necessary for effective alternative school educationists, this model is concerned with illuminating and assessing concrete examples or tendencies of teachers, students, and the educational program. Two provisioning instruments have been developed to achieve this objective. The Teacher Questionnaire assesses the learning environment as perceived by teachers. To give a more objective view and to overcome (as much as possible) acquiescent response bias by teachers, an Observation Rating Scale which paralells the Teacher Questionnaire has been developed (Walberg and Thomas, 1971; Morris 1974).

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*Provisioning refers to the way in which time, space, material, equipment, and activities are used in the learning environment.

AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL MODEL

by Lee Morris

Conventional and Alternative School Continuum

Conventional School Characteristics	⟷ Educational experiences of students	Alternative School Characteristic
1. information-gathering		1. problem-solving
2. fact-centered		2. idea-centered
3. subject-centered		3. experience-centered
4. primarily group instruction		4. primarily individualized instruction
5. norm-referenced evaluation		5. criterion-referenced evaluati
6. teacher dominated		6. teacher-student planning
7. convergent questioning		7. divergent questioning
8. vicarious & confined to the classroom		8. interaction with things & extends to the community

(Each school of thought reflects a different set of assumptions about human nature.)

Operationalizing an Alternative School

1. Provisioning the learning environment (see pages 1-3 and the Provisioning Instruments).

Frame of Reference for Alternative School Teachers/Administrators

1. Psychodynamic Theory--affective, attitudinal, emotional, or feeling (Erikson and Rogers).
2. Cognitive Theory--intellectual, thinking, or comprehension (Piaget, Bruner, and Taba).
3. Social Behavior Theory--doing, behaving, or acting (Sears and Dewey).

Essential Elements of an Alternative School

1. Personalization and individualization of instruction.
2. Integration of subjects and inclusion of community in the curriculum.
3. Flexible time schedules.
4. Integration of work and play.

Extensions of an Alternative School

1. Flexible space (open, modified, etc.).
2. Team teaching.

Functions of Alternative School Teachers

1. Active teacher involvement--observing, listening, asking divergent and experienced-based questions, and demonstrating.
2. Record keeping and continuous reporting of student progress.

Functions of Students in Alternative Schools

1. Active involvement in the learning process--planning, exploring, demonstrating, keeping records of progress, and evaluating.
2. Major responsibility for affective, cognitive, and social behavior.

In an effort to operationalize alternative school practices, the instruments may be used in the following ways:

(1) As a diagnostic tool to establish a benchmark for teacher/administrator inservice training.

(2) To assess actual provisioning tendencies relative to time, space, and material utilization.

(3) The collection of data on teachers' perception of the learning environment which may be correlated with students' perception of the learning environment.

Admittedly, there are no conceptual frameworks or models which are all inclusive and deserving of complacency. Thus, recommendations for further exploration and development are as follows:

(1) Development of an instrument(s) which assess assumptions about knowledge and the process of learning. Subsequent development of activities which will equip teachers/administrators with desired attitudes toward differences, children and the schooling process.

(2) Development of an instrument(s) that assess the manner in which teachers diagnose the student and the learning environment. Subsequent development of activities that equip teachers with a systematic and individualized diagnostic strategy.

(3) Development of an instrument(s) which assess the degree to which the students' program is individualized. Subsequent development of activities that equip teachers with skills in personalizing and individualizing instruction.

(4) Development of an instrument(s) that assesses teacher practices as s/he evaluates the student and learning provisions. Subsequent development of inservice activities that equip teachers with criterion - referenced or performance-based evaluative strategies.

(5) Development of an instrument(s) that assesses the degree to which teachers behave humanely toward students. Subsequent intervention strategies that enable teachers to treat students (and each other) with more respect, openness, and warmth.

As indicated earlier in this discussion, provisioning of the learning environment is used in this proposed model to operationalize alternative school practices because of concrete examples which are provided. The value of this dimension as compared with the recommendations for further development is not the issue. Provisioning should be viewed as a first step in assessing ongoing tendencies and the subsequent training of the helping adults. Further, it seems reasonably safe to assume that the way teachers provision the learning environment undergrids other dimensions of their task e.g., diagnosis, individualization of instruction, evaluation, assumptions (expectations), and humaneness.

FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

A desired frame of reference for professional educators involves, at least, a three dimensional foci. First, a Psychodynamic Theory (attitudinal, emotional, or feeling) comparable to the developmental work of Erikson or Rogers should be internalized by teachers. Secondly, teachers should have a working knowledge of a Cognitive Theory (intellectual, thinking or comprehension) comparable to that of Piaget, Bruner or Taba. Thirdly, teachers need knowledge of a Social Behavior Theory (acting, doing, or behaving) which paralells the work of Sears or Dewey. The development of these theories into a "package" or modularized instruction for teachers is a necessary component for alternative school training.

PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Essential elements, extended elements, and teacher-student functions all refer to the desired products and outcomes of the alternative school model. Like other components of the model, the "Essential Element" category should be viewed as inconclusive with adequate flexibility for additions. Flexible space and team teaching are thought of as extensions (rather than essentials) which encourage desired tendencies but may not of themselves operationalize alternative school practices.

Functions of teachers and students as outlined in the model are desired outcomes or ideals for which alternative schools should be striving. Stated differently, active teacher and student involvement resulting in students assuming major responsibility for their behavior, attitude, and cognition is the ultimate objective of the education process.

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Walberg, Herbert J. and Thomas, Susan C., Characteristics of Open Education: A Look at the Literature for Teachers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED058164, 1971).

PROVISIONING INSTRUMENTS

1) Teacher Questionnaire
2) Observation Rating Scale

SHORT FORM

School_____
Classroom_____
Teacher_____

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: For each of the following statements, circle the number which most closely expresses your estimate of the extent to which the statement is true of your own classroom. If the statement is absolutely not the case, circle "1"; if it is very minimally true, choose "2". If the statement generally describes your classroom, choose "3"; if it is absolutely true choose "4".

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1.	Texts and materials are supplied in class sets so that all children may have their own.	1	2	3	4
2.	Each child has a space for his personal storage and the major part of the classroom is organized for common use.	1	2	3	4
3.	Materials are kept out of the way until they are distributed or used under my direction.	1	2	3	4
4.	Many different activities go on simultaneously.	1	2	3	4
5.	Children are expected to do their own work without getting help from other children.	1	2	3	4
6.	Manipulative materials are supplied in great diversity and range, with little replication.	1	2	3	4
7.	The day is divided into large blocks of time within which children, with my help, determine their own routine.	1	2	3	4
8.	Children work individually and in small groups at various activities.	1	2	3	4
9.	Books are supplied in diversity and profusion (including reference books, children's literature).	1	2	3	4
10.	Children are not suppose to move about the room without asking permission.	1	2	3	4

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
11.	Desks are arranged so that every child can see the blackboard or teacher from his desk.	1	2	3	4
12.	The environment includes materials I have developed.	1	2	3	4
13.	Common environmental materials are provided.	1	2	3	4
14.	Children may voluntarily use other areas of the building and schoolyard as part of their school time.	1	2	3	4
15.	Our program includes use of the neighborhood.	1	2	3	4
16.	Children use "books" written by their classmates as part of their reading and reference materials.	1	2	3	4
17.	I prefer that children not talk when they are supposed to be working.	1	2	3	4
18.	Children voluntarily group and regroup themselves.	1	2	3	4
19.	The environment includes materials developed or supplied by the children.	1	2	3	4
20.	I plan to schedule the children's activities, through the day.	1	2	3	4
21.	Children work directly with manipulative materials.	1	2	3	4
22.	Materials are readily accessible to children.	1	2	3	4
23.	The work children do is divided into subject matter areas.	1	2	3	4
24.	My lessons and assignments are given to the class as a whole.	1	2	3	4
25.	To obtain diagnostic information, I observe the specific work or concern of a child closely and ask immediate, experienced-based questions.	1	2	3	4
26.	Children's activities, products and ideas are reflected abundantly about the classroom.	1	2	3	4

		strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
27.	I use tests to evaluate children and rate them in comparison to their peers.	1	2	3	4
28.	I keep a collection of each child's work for use in evaluating his development.	1	2	3	4
29.	Evaluation provides information to guide my instruction and provisioning for the classroom.	1	2	3	4
30.	I base my instruction on curriculum guides or the text books for the grade level I teach.	1	2	3	4

School_____
Classroom_____
Teacher_____
Observer_____

OBSERVATION RATING SCALE

	No evidence	Weak infrequent	Moderate occasional	Strong frequent evidence
1. Texts and materials are supplied in class sets so that all children may have their own.	1	2	3	4
2. Each child has a space for his personal storage and the major part of the classroom is organized for common use.	1	2	3	4
3. Materials are kept out of the way until they are distributed or used under the teacher's direction.	1	2	3	4
4. Many different activities go on simultaneously.	1	2	3	4
5. Children are expected to do their own work without getting help from other children.	1	2	3	4
6. Manipulative materials are supplied in great diversity and range, with little replication.	1	2	3	4
7. Day is divided into large blocks of time within which children, with the teacher's help, determine their own routine.	1	2	3	4
8. Children work individually and in small groups at various activities.	1	2	3	4
9. Books are supplied in diversity and profusion (including reference and children's literature).	1	2	3	4
10. Children are not supposed to move about the room without asking permission.	1	2	3	4
11. Desks are arranged so that every child can see the blackboard or teacher from his desk.	1	2	3	4

		No evidence	Weak infrequent	Moderate occasional	Strong frequent evidence
12.	The environment includes materials developed by the teacher.	1	2	3	4
13.	Common environmental materials are provided.	1	2	3	4
14.	Children may voluntarily make use of other areas of the building and school yard as part of their school time.	1	2	3	4
15.	The program includes use of the neighborhood	1	2	3	4
16.	Children use "books" written by their classmates as part of their reading and reference materials.	1	2	3	4
17.	Teacher prefers that children not talk when they are supposed to be working.	1	2	3	4
18.	Children voluntarily group and re-group themselves.	1	2	3	4
19.	The environment includes materials developed or supplied by the children.	1	2	3	4
20.	Teacher plans and schedules the children's activities through the day.	1	2	3	4
21.	Children work directly with manipulative materials.	1	2	3	4
22.	Materials are readily accessible to children.	1	2	3	4
23.	The work children do is divided into subject matter areas.	1	2	3	4
24.	The teacher's lessons and assignments are given to the class as a whole.	1	2	3	4
25.	To obtain diagnostic information, the teacher closely observes the specific work or concern of a child and asks immediate, experienced-based questions.	1	2	3	4
26.	Teacher bases her instruction on curriculum guides or text books for the grade level she teaches.	1	2	3	4
27.	Children's activities, products, and ideas are reflected abundantly about the classroom.	1	2	3	4

	No evidence	Weak infrequent	Moderate occasional	Strong frequent evidence
28. Teacher uses tests to evaluate children and rate them incomparison to their peers.	1	2	3	4
29. Teacher keeps a collection of each child's work for use in evaluating his development.	1	2	3	4
30. Teacher views evaluation as information to guide her instruction and provisioning for the classroom.	1	2	3	4